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No. 1

NAULAGARH INSCRIPTION

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(INDIA)

By the President of the Society,

R. K. Chaudhary.

Introduction.

Before dealing with the importance of the Naulagarh Image Inscription, it is necessary to discuss about the antaiquity and the historicity of Naulagarh. In persuance of a general appeal to all students of the college to collect information and, if possible, also to bring objects of antiquarian value from their localities for the Jayaswal Archaeological and Historical Society and Museum, information reached the President about the existence of ancient mounds and an image with inscription at Naulagarh, which lies to the north at a distance of about sixteen miles from Begusarai. Prof. S. N. Singh, Head of the History Department and Prof. R. K. Choudhary, President of the Society were deputed by the Principal to make a preliminary survey of the site and the finds as well as to collect information relating to the antiquity of the site. The results of their investigation are given below which are in the nature of a preliminary report about the discovery. As a full scale and complete exploration of the area covering about 25 sq. miles, is beyond the resources and powers of our society, it is expected that this work will be undertaken by the Department of Archaeology and our Ministry of Education whose attention is drawn to the importance of the discovery likely to help in rewriting and reconstructing the history of a forgotten period in North Bihar. It is clear beyond any shadow of doubt that Naulagarh was at one time, an important centre of historical importance. The inscription, referred to, takes it back to the Pala period of our history but the mounds seemed to be even earlier than that.

Acknowledgements.

Our acknowledgements are due to :—

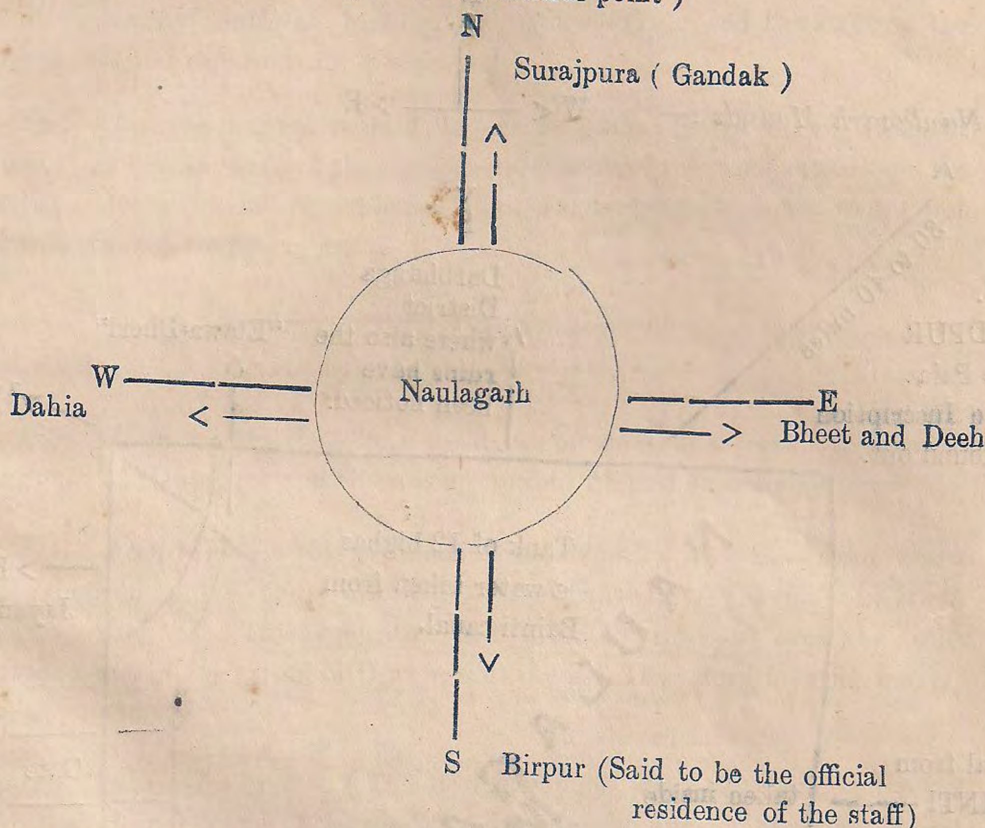
1 Sri Ramanath Prasad Singh—Zemindar, Village, Naulagarh, for sparing no pains to collect and protect all objects of antiquarian value for helping in our preliminary survey, as well as supplying us with some finds of the locality for our Museum.

2 Srimati Indulekha Devi, M. A., wife of Principal G. D. Chakravarti, for helping us by deciphering the inscription and ascertaining the age of the script, on the basis of which the age of the inscription has been determined.

3 Dr. Priyatosh Banerjee M. A., Ph.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta, for helping us in deciphering the Inscription.

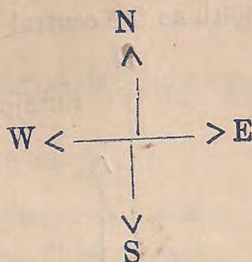
4 Prof. Sachchida Nand Singh, M. A., Head of the Department of History and Politics, without whose active co-operation and constant support, the preliminary investigation would not have been successful.

(*i*) *Plan :*— (With Naulagarh as the central point)



It is to be remembered that a belt covering an area of five to six miles is full of ancient mounds. The site seems to be even earlier than the Palas. Five or six villages are of ancient historical importance. Much has already been destroyed by the rapacious hand of nature and the extreme ignorance and carelessness of the villagers. As the whole belt could not be surveyed, we simply concentrated on Naulagarh said to be the most ancient site, and surveyed the whole area for about eight hours. The mounds in Naulagarh cover an area of 360 bighas and the very site of the village speaks of its antiquity.

(ii) Naulagarh Mounds :—



30 to 40 miles

N. W.
IMADPUR
where Pala
Image Inscription
was found out.

Darbhanga
District
where also the
ruins have
been noticed.

"Etawa-Dheri"

Images found

NAULAGARH MOUNDS

Tank of 12 bighas
⊙ water taken from
Bainti canal.

Facing
Jayamanglagarh.

Gate

(Main
gate)

Canal from
BAINTI

taken inside

(Surplus water
of the Ganges
used to flow in
Bainti during
the rains in
ancient time)

Drainage

(iii) Description of Naulagarh and other allied villages—

(A) Naulagarh was the residential town of the king in ancient times—most probably the chief administrative centre during the time of Vigrahpala III or even during the early Pala period. Naula was surrounded on all sides by Garh or fortification with the Gates and Drainage on the eastern side and canal on the western side.

(B) Jaimanglagarh is said to be religious centre of the ancient rulers. The garh, even at the present time, is chief religious centre of the locality. It is to be remembered that Jaimanglagarh faces west (i. e. towards Naulagarh)

——— ——— > JAIMANGLAGARH

NAULAGARH < ——— ——— ——

(C) Birpur—was the official residence of the king's staff. It was to the South of Naulagarh and there is an ancient Mound even today.

(D) Fasianri—(a tola of modern Naulagarh) was the *fixed* place where persons, proved to be criminals, were hanged. (" Fansi " in Hindi means " hang "). This indicates that after the trial was over, the guilty persons (meant for execution) were sent there. The story is still current in the village.

(E) Khoja-Bangla — (The term Bangla was later on attached with the original name " Khoja "). It has an ancient mound Local tradition asserts that formerly it was the kitchen centre of the king. Later on it became a famous " Bhatthi-Khana " (wine-producing centre). It is said that a special kind of iron was found there which was used by Vaidyas (Ayurvedic Physicians) for preparing " Mandur-Bhasma ". People from far-off countries and other parts of India used to come here for that iron to prepare Ayurvedic medicine. It was an important medical centre, especially in the branch of above-mentioned Bhasma.

(F) - Mahendri— lies between Balan and Bainti rivers. Its area covers only two Bighas of land. It was an important medical centre and was famous for its " Jari-buti " from which Ayurvedic medicines were pre-

pared. People from the N. W. part of our country used to come here for this particular type of Jari-buti which was available here.

(iii) List of Finds Scattered in the Village :—

(A) Brahma-Asthana —(i) A piece of door-frame with fine sculpture.

(ii) Footsteps of the image (in Black-stone)

(B) In the temple of Naula Estate :—(of Choudhary Sahib) Door-Frame with the following pictures :—

Black-Gaya stone:
- (i) Vidyadhar
- (ii) Horse in motion
- (iii) Elephant with one sawar

(C) Brahmadevata Asthan :—

Black-Gaya stone.
- (i) Door-frame with the same pictures as in (B)
- (ii) Various broken pieces of images.
- (iii) A full-size face of Buddha (though a bit destroyed) —Vide Plate 3

(D) Chandika Asthan - Fine sculptural remains in Black-stone

(E) In the House of Worship of Babu Devanarayan Singh (Bheet) there are two fine black-stone images of Buddha and Chaturmukhi Shiva.

(F) Flying Gandharva :—

(G) With Sri Ramanath Singh :—

(i) Big earthen Jars and broken pieces of earthen pots with some paintings and workmanship on some of them.

(ii) Small beads of different varieties.

(iii) A red, rubber-cum-stone-like find.

(iv) Black-stone slab of the size of Taraju or Thali or Dhakna with straight line cum round markings on the both sides of the same.

(v) An earthen seal *(Vide Plate No. 7)*

(vi) A brick with fine-workmanship on the both sides of the corner—the size of the bricks being—

(a) Length—9″

(b) Breadth—7″

(c) Thickness—2″

(vii) A broken Vishnu Image with an Inscription on the pedestal (Vide Plate No. I)

(viii) One silver coin (Vide Plate No. 5)

(ix) 2 or 3 brick-balls.

(H) Stray finds :— Two or three brick balls.

(i) About 15 years ago, while digging a well a full-length skeleton of a man was found out at depth of about 20 cubits below—

(ii) At a depth of 12 or 13 cubits below a Nadi (नादि)—used as a plate for feeding the cattle, was found out.

(iii) (a) While digging a tank, human bones, coal, courie, etc. were found at a depth of 5 to 7 cubits below.

(b) Two kinds of soils were noticed—(i) Sandy soil, seemed to be a remnant of a very ancient river bed and

(ii) Hard soil.

(iv) A very old well in between Naula and Bheet.

(v) Some important types of bricks are noted below :—

	Length	Breadth	Thickness
(a)	14″	$10\frac{1}{2}$″	3″
(b)	12″	7″	5″
(c)	9″	7″	2″

(vi) (a) The general feature of the rampart is said to be of a mud wall in the centre and Pucca walls on both sides.

(b) All images and seal have been found out on the north-eastern part of the Mound facing Jaimanglagarh.

(c) The Mound belonging to Bachu Babu in the same plot is still untouched.

(d) A large number of brick-balls (only few left now.)

(vii) On a brick-ball, found during the construction of Bachu Babu's House, some 15 years ago, a sloka was written but unfortunately that ball is missing.

(viii) Flying Vidyadhara. (Vide Plate No. 4)

(ix) Coin (Vide Plate No. 6)

(x) Besides all these, about hundred black images of various gods and goddesses, etc. are scattered there exposed to the nature.

(iv) Folk-Tales About Naulagarh :—

NAULAGARH—Also called Rājā Nala Kā Garh.

Once upon a time there lived a king named Nala. He had two wives. He had a daughter from the first wife and the second one was issueless. The second wife was of mischievous nature. She entered into a political conspiracy with her relative and invited him to come and invade Naulagarh. The king was informed about the conspiracy and he began to repair the fortifications of the Garh. Northern and eastern portions were repaired and the southern portion of the same was on the point of completion. The western portion was not so solid as it had mud-brick walls. The fortification was so much complicated that it was difficult for an invader to enter the compound. The invader, in disgust, returned but in the meantime, the second wife gave out the clue and requested him to come by the western side. When the invader entered the compound, he was confronted with another hurdle. Just after the end of the mud brick wall on the western side there was a gate known as 'Putli' where such permanent arrangements were made as to kill the invader (whoever he may be). As the invader

did not know the secret, he sent his soldiers inside through gate but none returned. He was very much troubled at the sight but the second queen came to his rescue. But even then the invader had to cross three such hurdles (Putli) and finally he had a pitched battle inside the compound. The king was defeated and he fled away along with his army. The king concealed himself in the trunk of a tree near by. The king was ultimately killed. The first queen with her daughter, was on a boat in the tank and when she heard about the death of her husband, she also died by drawning herself. The second wife accompanied the invader, but was later on killed in a most humiliating manner by the same man.

It is said that the king of Naulagarh had golden boats for his pleasure trips in the tank inside the compound. The current story is that he was also called " Garhwe Rājā ". The people of Naulagarh do not like to disclose this particular story to others because they think it as very humiliating and derogatory to their prestige. It is through the courtesy of Ramnath Babu that we could get this story.

Points concerning fortifications -:—

(i) A branch of the Ganges flowed to the west of the present Mounds of Naulagarh. It flowed in Bainti, a river flowing these days from south to north.

(ii) Round about the fortifications there was a canal brought from the branch of the Ganges. The aim of having canals surrounding the fort was to ward off the enemy.

(iii) Inside the fort was a tank (of about 12 bighas) for the personal use of the king and there was a regular supply of water from the canal.

(iv) There was a drain from west to the east.

(v) There were four gates on four sides. The main gate on the eastern side.

(vi) There is a place on the mound known as "Etawa-Dheri" in the north. The king is said to have died there and it is presumed that his treasury is still buried there.

Description of the Plates.

1 The Image[1] :—

The present image is probably that of Vishnu.

2 The Inscription, on the pedestal of the image reads:—

Line 1 :—Om Sri Vigrahpaldeva rajye samvat 24 krimitiya sau—

Line 2 :—ndika ? Mahāmati duhitra Dhāmmajiyapatnya Asokayā ka . ...

Note :—The last two words are not distinct.

3 An image of the Boddhisattva.

4 Flying Vidyādhara.

5 Silver Coin—as yet undeciphered.

6 Coin—metal undecided and signs yet unascertained.

7 Clay Seal—Signs not ascertained.

8 Clay Seal – Signs not ascertained.

Naulagarh Image Inscription.

Line 1 : Om Sri Vigrahapāladeva rājye samvat 21 Krimitiya sau—

Line 2 : ndika ? Mahāmati duhitrā Dhāmmajiyapatnyā Asokaya ka...

Note :—the last two words not distinct.

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1 Names of places where important Vishnu images have been found :— Hankrail (Maldah), Laksmankati (Bakarganj), Chaitanpur (Burdwan), Bāghaura (Tipperah), Burdwan, Surohor (Dinajpur), Sagardighi, Itahar (Dinajpur) Kalandarpur stone Image of Vishnu, Trivikram standing Vishnu at Rangpur, Sarangarh (Bankura), Deorat (Bogra), Sonarang (Dacca).

PL. 1



PL. 4.



PL. 3



PL. 2

[illegible]
[illegible]

PL. 5.



PL 5. Obverse



PL 6



PL 6. Obverse



PL 7



Plate 7 obverse



PL 8.



PL 8. Obverse



GANESH DUTTA COLLEGE, BEGUSARAI.
(BIHAR)

PHOTO BY
CIHTRAKALA STUDIO
BEGUSARAI.

Importance of the word "Krimi"

While preparing the manuscript for the Press, the article[1] of Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sarkar came out discussing about the ancient city of Krmila. According to the learned scholar there were two Bhuktis, viz, Srinagarbhukti (also indentified with Pataliputra) and Tirabhukti. On the basis of recent discoveries, Dr. Sarkar has found out a Krmila Visaya (district) forming the part of Srinagarbhukti and while discussing its exact location he observes, "nothing can be said definitely until further evidence is forthcoming."

The mention of the word "Krimi" in our inscription may also throw some light on the contemporary history. The only Visaya (district) forming part of Tirabhukti division is Kaksa-Visaya (district), though its exact situation has not yet been satisfactorily located. It may be conjectured that this area, where our inscription has been found, also formed a Visaya (district) of Tirabhukti with Naulagarh as its head-quarters.

The Inscription :—Line I Om Sri Vigrahpāladeva rājya samvat 24 Krimitiya San.........

Line II nd ka ? Mahāmati duhitrā Dhammajiya-

patiyā Asokaya kā ....

The Naulagarh Stone Image Inscription is a brilliant discovery and adds a new list to the already existing Pala records spread over different parts of our country. The discovery is unique in the sense that it throws a flood of light on the Pala history in North Bihar. The inscription refers to king Vigrahpaldeva but it does not say as to which of the three Vigrahpaldevas can this be attributed. This is a common phenomenon of all such Pala records wherever there have been two or three. kings of the same name and instances to this effect are not lacking

I "The ancient city and district of krimita" by Dr. D. C. Sarker in "Indian Historical Quarterly" Vol. 20 No. 2 (June, 1950) P. 138-41.

Hence we will have to judge this inscription from various standpoints and fix the name of actual king. On the grounds, given below, this inscription may be attributed to king Vigrahapal III.

(a) The existing political condition of Pala kingdom during the reign of king Vigrahpaldeva III.

(b) The uncertainty about the chronology of Vigrahpala III.

(c) To what extent does the present image come under mediaeval school of eastern art in the 11th & 12th centuries ?

(d) The Script of the Inscription.

Before dwelling at length upon the points raised above, it is better to give below the findspots of three Vigrahpalas in Bihar and also the known length of their successive reigns.

(a) *Findspots* :—

(1) Vigrahpala I—year 3—Two identical Bihar Buddha image Inscriptions.

(2) Vigrahpala II[1] (or III) year 3 (2 ?)—Kurkihar Image Inscription.

... ... year 19 ,,

... ... year 19— ,,

(3) Vigrahpala III ... year 5[2]—Gaya Akshayvat Temple Inscription.

... ... year 13[3]—Bihar Buddha Image Inscription.

1—It cannot be Vigrahpala II as the admitted date of Vigrahpala III is 1055 A.D. Dr. A. Banerjee Sastri has taken 1058 A.D. as the year 3 of that Inscription (JBORS XXVI—Pt. 3 P. 237). Hence 1058-3 = 1055 and as such it cannot be date of Vigrahpala II.

2—R. D. Banerjee—Palas of Bengal P. 81.

3—Ibid—P. 112.

(*b*) *Known lengths & approximate dates :—*

(1) Vigrahpala I or Surpala – 3 years – 850 A.D. (850-854)

(2) Vigrahpala II ... 26 years (?) – 960 A.D. (960-988)

(3) Mahipala I ... ... (988-1035)

(4) Nayapala ... ... 1035 A.D. ... ...

(5) Vigrahpala III ... × 1054 A.D. ... ...

Mahipala II... 1070[1]

Let us now take up the points one by one. The Pala power had begun to crack up by the time of Vigrahpala I. He did not take much interest in the political activities and was a man of pacific and religious dispostion. By the time of Vigrahpala II three well-defined kingdoms had come to stay.

(a) Chandra Kingdom comprising east and south Bengal.

(c) Kamboja and Pala Kingdom proper comprising Anga and Magadha.

(c) Gopala II and Vigrahpala II had the curious misfortune of losing the paternal territory of the dynasty, though ruling over other parts of the kingdom.

The disintegration had set in. The Palas were losing their political hold not only in Bengal but also in Bihar. The findspots of Mahipal I's inscription show that he was in possession of South and North Bihar. No other Pala records were upto this period were found and people believed that Pala rule was limited to South Bihar. Jayswal was of opinion that the Palas ruled over undivided Bengal and Bihar excluding Mithila.[2] Another authority stated, "it is not exactly known what influence the Palas exercised over Tirhut in the 11th century A.D. [3] It is not certain whether Mohipala inherited or conquered North Bihar, but the fact remains that North Bihar was included in his dominions. That he ruled over Tirhut is now proved by the Imadpur Image Inscription. Mahipala had attempted to retrieve the lost position of Palas and it is quite likely that he might have conquered

1 – Vide "History of Bengal' Vol I, P. 177 Ed. by Dr. R. C. Mazumdar, (Published by D. U.)

2 K. P. Jayswal, JBORS IX P to 3 and 4 P. 300.

3 S. N. Singh, History of Tirhut P. 56.

North Bihar. Mahipala's success could not be maintained for long by his successors. The Pala Kings came into conflict with the Kalachuris and Karna advanced upto the borders of West Bengal. According to Ramcharita[1] Vigrahpaladeva III defeated Karna and married his daughter Yanvansri. Both Nayapal and Vigrahpala III lost hold over West Bengal [2]. While the political power of the Palas was on the wane, Chalukya invasion under Vikramaditya took place in the reign of Vigrahpaldeva III. The Somavamsi ruler, Mahasiva Gupta Yayati, of Orissa also invaded Bengal in the middle of the 11th century A.D. Thus the Palas were reduced to non-entity and the Pala power in Magadha was simply a shadow. An inscription from Gaya of 5th regnal year of king Vigrahpaladeva III says about the use of a new dynasty in Gaya, handed by Sudraka. Thus it is evident that Pala sovereignty was crumbling and their suzerainty over Magadha was reduced to a mere name.

From what we have seen above, it is evident that the Palas had practically lost all power in South Bihar. Being ousted from South Bihar they tried to retrieve this patrimony in North Bihar, which came under the Pala hegemony during the time of Mahipal if not earlier. Here we have to remember that while the inscriptions of Pala rules have been found in abundance in South Bihar, we had only one up to this period in N. Bihar and Naulagarh is the second. It is quite likely that when the Palas were sufficiently weakened in Magadha, they tried to strengthen their position in Tirhut. Mahipala I had established his authority in Tirhut and it is quite likely that his successors either Nayapal or Vigrahpala III should have extended their authority in that area. They must have established their fort in Naulagarh for the preservation of their power. Naulagarh's close proximity to Gandak shows its importance. The report in the previous pages shows that in ancient time Ganges water also touched the rampart area in Naulagarh. Another important point to be noted is that Naulagarh is only at a distance of about 35 to 43 miles from Imadpur, where Mahipala's inscription was found. It seems probable that when during Vigrahpala III's reign the Palas in Magadha were reduced to mere name. They shifted their centre of

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1 i. g. Commentar.
2 Mazumdar Opt. Cit.—P. 146.

activity to Naulagarh, which was probably protected by river from both sides. Vigrahpala III's chronology is still uncertain and it is likely that Vigrahpala III might have ruled for more than 24 years. This inscription if studied in the light of other epigraphic evidences in connection with the Pala chronology, may help us in ascertaining the exact date of Vigrahpala III's reign.

The motif and design of the image, in question, are also remarkable and may help us in ascertaining the age. The Pala period of our history us-, herd in a local school with its own characteristics known as the Eastern School of Mediaeval Art. The Pala kings were Buddhists and as such they patronised the Buddhist art. But here we have to remember that Gupta tide and tradition persisted for a longer period in Bihar and the majority of people were within the fold of Brahmanism. The religious objects were generally translated into the objects of art. The stone is typically the Black Gaya stone. By the middle of the 11th century the flying Gandharvas had been balanced between the two extremes of exuberance and sensuous developments. On the either side the attendant divinities and other accompanying figures are placed on separate lotus pedestal which shows the Vahanas of the deities represented. The vigour and strength of the body were transformed into one of gracefulness and elegant mannerism and the emphasis on decorative aspect is clear from the present image. Thus considered from the artistic and sculptural point of view, we cannot but place the present image in the latter half of the 11th Century A.D. and on this basis also we can safely conclude that this particular image inscription was inscribed during the reign of king Vigrahpala III.

The propagation of Hinduism was the marked feature of the age. We know that inspite of the existence of different religions there was no sectarian jealousy during this period. The Buddhist Pala Kings maintained catholic attitude. Judged from the number of cultimages we learn that of the two great sects in Brahmanical religion, Vaisnavism seems to have been more popular than Saivism. In official records, Vigrahapala III is given credit for maintaining orthodox social orders of caste [1]. Vigrahpala III must have bowed before the overwhelming majority of Hindu populace, because he

1 Amgachi C. P. of the year 12.

was politically very weak and had to depend, more or less, on the support of his Hindu subjects. Not only this, but the script of the inscription bears testimony to the fact that it belonged to the latter half of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th Century A.D. The script of the inscription is of early Bengali character of the 11th and 12th century A.D. As no other Vigrahapala except the third one flourished during the latter half of the 11th century, we may safely ascribe this inscription to Vigrahpala III and fix the length of his reign at 24 years, if not more, pending the results of other excavations. It is, therefore, suggested tentatively that the chronology since Vigrahpala III may be followed as such :—

1	Vigrahapala	III	1055 to 1079	instead of	1055 to 1070[1]	A.D.
2	Mahipala	II	1079 to 1084	...	1070 to 1075	"
3	Surpala	II	1084 to 1086	...	1075 to 1077	"
4	Rampala		1086 to 1128	...	1077 to 1120	"
5	Kumarpala		1128 to 1133	...	1120 to 1125	"
6	Gopala	III	1133 to 1147	...	1125 to 1140	"
7	Madanpala		1147 to 1161	...	1140 to 1154	"
8	Govindpala		1161 to 1165	...	1155 to 1159	"

1 As suggested in " History of Bengal " (Mazumdar) Vol 1 P. 177.

The Smart Press, Patna.